

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN EDWARDS BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE
HEARING ON GAMBLING IN AMATEUR SPORTS
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People in North Carolina are excited to have their state represented in the Final Four this coming weekend by the University of North Carolina. North Carolinians are excited because of their love for their state, pride in their university, and appreciation of the student-athletes who have made basketball a way of life in North Carolina.

While people in North Carolina are excited about the Final Four for all of the right reasons, there are people in Nevada who are excited for all of the wrong reasons. Bookies in Nevada are on the edge of their seats because they stand to make hundreds of thousands of dollars this weekend from gambling on the Final Four. Instead of rooting for a university because of loyalty, bookies in Nevada will root for a team for one reason and one reason only—to win money.

Gambling on college sports, which is currently illegal in forty-nine states, has led to numerous point shaving scandals in the 1990s. In fact, there were more point shaving scandals in the 1990s than in the previous five decades combined. Eight major universities were cited in the 1990s for point shaving scandals, and no school is immune, not even the most well-respected programs. Something must be done to stop this, and that is why I am proud to have cosponsored legislation to deal with this matter. I applaud Senator Brownback and Senator McCain for their efforts, as well as numerous other senators who have looked past partisan politics to do what is right for the thousands of amateur student-athletes on our college campuses.

The National Gambling Impact Study Commission, a study funded by Congress and released in 1999, recommends that “betting on collegiate and amateur athletic events that is currently legal be banned altogether.” This report goes on to say of sports wagering, “It puts student athletes in a vulnerable position, it can serve as gateway behavior for adolescent gamblers, and it can devastate individuals and careers.”

The ban has the support of Dean Smith, Coach Herb Sendek of North Carolina State University, Coach Krzyzewski of Duke, and Coach Bill Guthridge of the University of North Carolina, as well as more than sixty other coaches across the country. In addition, I have heard from school administrators from across North Carolina, from students who have been involved in point shaving schemes, and from the Commissioners of the Big South and Atlantic Coast Conferences who all support this ban.

The support of these groups is a clear indication that there is legitimate concern over the impact of legalized gambling on college games. Student-athletes should go to college to receive an education, not to get involved in felony point shaving scandals. They should go to college to learn invaluable life lessons, not to make money for the gaming industry in Nevada.

This bill is not intended to solve all of the gambling problems in America. It will not stop the millions of dollars that are gambled illegally in office pools or over the Internet. It will, however, start to restore some of the integrity that college athletics has lost due to recent point shaving scandals, and it will prevent casinos in Nevada from raking in close to a billion dollars annually on amateur athletics.

When I watch the University of North Carolina play on the hardwood in Indianapolis this

weekend, I want to be reminded of Michael Jordan hitting the game winning shot against Georgetown in 1982 national finals and Grant Hill leading Duke to victory over the University of Las Vegas in 1991 in the national semi-finals. I do not want to think of the reasons why if these games were played this weekend, the UNC-Georgetown game could be wagered on but not the Duke-UNLV game. Politicians in Nevada have outlawed betting on universities in their very own state. They recognize the potential for corruption that can be caused by gambling on college athletics. If gambling is so bad that they don't allow wagering on their own schools, why do they have the right to gamble on our schools? I believe I speak for the majority of North Carolinians when I say that casinos in Nevada should leave our college athletes and institutions alone.

We will hear from folks in Nevada about how well-regulated the gaming industry is and how they helped discover the point shaving scandals. However, you will not hear them talk about the millions of dollars they give annually to politicians. You will not hear them talk about the influence their money has here in Washington. And you will not hear them talk about the billions and billions of dollars their casinos make by other means. If the gaming industry truly wants to be a part of the solution and not a part of the problem, they will do away with legal gambling on college sports.

I support this ban but not to cripple the gaming industry. I guarantee you that the lights will not go out in Las Vegas if gambling on college sports is stopped. I support this ban because it is the right thing to do. Student-athletes should not be money making magnets for casinos in Nevada. They are students first, and athletes second, and it's about time we all started treating

them that way.